

The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller  
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SUBJECT: Retaliation for Beirut Bombing

1. The evidence of guilt in the Beirut bombing of the Marine Headquarters falls somewhat short of the smoking gun we would all like. This parallels the situation following the bombing of our embassy in Beirut last April. In all likelihood we will never get the smoking gun, and we legalistically-minded Americans tend to want to have the kind of evidence that would hold up in court before taking lethal action.

2. Two issues are involved here:

- A desire for retribution for real damage done to us.
- A desire to get across a political message which will not just satisfy our anger but will have positive long-run benefits.

3. The evidence linking the Iranians is considerably stronger than that linking the Syrians. Above all else we have clear cut expressions of intent on the part of the Iranians in both cases. Given Iran's vowed hostility to the United States in the Middle East, I believe the evidence is certainly good enough for us to undertake retaliation against facilities in the Bekaa run by the Iranians in conjunction with their Shia surrogates.

4. A good case can be made for limiting retaliation to a major strike against Iranian facilities in the first instance. This could then be followed by a probationary period before undertaking any second strike against Syrian-related installations and personnel. There are significant differences between Iran and Syria in Lebanon.

- The Iranians are implacably hostile to the US presence throughout the Middle East. This stems from deep Iranian ideological conviction that the West is the ultimate corruptor

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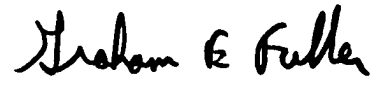
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of the Islamic virtuous life. Iran will not wish to seek accommodation with the US in the Middle East on any grounds.

- Syria, while firmly pursuing its own state interests, is not ideological and is prepared to reach some kind of accommodation with the US if the price is right.
- Iran -- even more than Syria -- is a truly foreign presence in Lebanon.
- The Iranians seek to capture the Lebanese Shia population for its own ends. The bulk of the Shia are likely to resist this Iranian intervention and are absolutely essential not only to the future of the government of Lebanon but to the successful integration of the Shia-dominated south back into Lebanon whenever Israel withdraws.
- There are significant disagreements between the Iranians and Syrians on Lebanon: Iran hates Nabih Barri; Syria wishes to reach accommodation with him. Iran wants an Islamic fundamentalist regime in Lebanon; Syria does not. Iranian adventures in Lebanon cannot be fine-tuned by Syria and can drag Syria into situations it cannot control.
- An attack on the Iranians will help drive a wedge between Iran and Syria -- especially if Syria is not now hit.

5. There are some signs that Syria is concerned about US retaliation. If after a strike against the Iranians no significant change in Syrian behavior seems to be forthcoming, we can always undertake measures against Syria.

6. I believe it is important that the US be the instrument of any retaliation against either Iran or Syria, rather than the Israelis. This is our problem, our Marines, and we are attempting to obtain US goals. We do not wish to suggest that Israel is either our instrument or the chief beneficiary of American policy in the region.

  
Graham E. Fuller

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